



**National Park Service**  
**U.S. Department of the Interior**

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## **Cape Cod National Seashore News Release**

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**Phone number:** 617-223-5014

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### **National Park Service Awards Contract for Dune Shack Research Project**

The National Park Service has announced that Dr. Robert J. Wolfe, of Robert J. Wolfe and Associates, has been awarded a contract to conduct an ethnographic research study at Cape Cod National Seashore beginning this summer.

The focus of the research is the Dune Shacks of the Peaked Hill Bars Historic District in North Truro and Provincetown, and specifically, the traditional cultural practices associated with the dune shacks and the people who use them. His research will consist primarily of key respondent interviews and oral histories, combined with demography, mapping, and describing patterns of use and activity. He will also review archival sources, public testimony, video, and published material. Interviews will be conducted both with occupants who have long associations with the shacks, as well as people and representatives of organizations who may not be classified as long-term occupants.

Dr. Wolfe, the principal investigator for this study, is trained in cultural anthropology. He is a leading researcher of customary and traditional activities on public lands in Alaska.

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He has over twenty years of experience documenting and analyzing traditional ways of living in small communities, serving as research director for the Division of Subsistence, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 1982-2001. His work with small communities has addressed a wide range of management issues on public lands that include providing for customary and traditional uses of public lands by rural villages under pressure from expanding urban populations. He currently is the senior researcher of Robert J. Wolfe and Associates, a research organization conducting basic and applied anthropological research headquartered in San Marcos, California.

The purpose of the dune shack study is to provide information to the National Park Service in order to make appropriate management decisions regarding the future use and preservation of the district, as well as to determine whether the historic district is a traditional cultural property and the dune community is a traditionally associated people. This determination will be used to address the issue of continued access to and use of the shacks by those who have associations with the shacks.

The Dune Shacks of the Peaked Hill Bars Historic District was found eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in 1989. Since then, many groups have met and discussed the need for greater understanding and documentation of the distinctive mix of cultural practices, patterns of human use, practices of maintenance and repair, and special values of the district not defined by the National Register determination. These groups have included concerned citizens and dune shack dwellers, the Dune Shack Subcommittee of the Cape Cod National Seashore Advisory Commission, and a group of senior National Park Service policy makers and representatives of the Massachusetts Historical Commission who met last October. All of these groups have recommended that in order to make effective long-term management decisions about the district, additional documentation is needed on the people who live in the shacks and who are part of the local cultural heritage.

Dr. Wolfe plans to make an initial visit to the area in July and may make preliminary contacts with members of the dune shack community at that time. More intensive fieldwork is scheduled in August and September. Questions about the project can be directed to the NPS Northeast Regional Ethnography Program Manager Chuck Smythe at (617) 223-5014.

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